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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VIENNA 000372

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NP/MNA, IO/P, EUR/ERA, AND EUR/AGS
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TAGS: PARM KNNP AU NPT IAEA EUN

SUBJECT: NPT 2005 REVCON PREPARATIONS: AUSTRIAN RESPONSE

REF: STATE 18228

Classified By: ECONOMIC-POLITICAL COUNSELOR GREGORY E. PHILLIPS
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶11. (C) Embassy conveyed reftel demarche to Austrian MFA Non-Proliferation Bureau on February 2. PolOffs followed up on February 4 with Robert Zischg, MFA director for Nuclear Nonproliferation, Disarmament, and Arms Control. Zischg's likely successor, Alexander Kmentt, also participated. Zischg expressed appreciation for USG efforts to engage foreign officials on RevCon preparations. The GoA fully shares U.S. concerns over non-nuclear weapon state (NNWS) noncompliance with NPT Articles II and III and misuse of Article IV, he said. Zischg stressed the need, though "politically and legally complicated," to strengthen the NPT regime regarding "sensitive parts of the nuclear fuel cycle," especially uranium enrichment and reprocessing.

IRAN

¶12. (C) Zischg assured us that the EU is focused on discrepancies in Iran's accounting of its "civilian" nuclear program. The EU expects "clear assurances from Tehran that it is in compliance." Zischg noted that Austria is not a supporter of civilian nuclear energy and believes that Iran's much-cited "right" to exploit nuclear energy for peaceful purposes under NPT Article IV depends on full and verifiable Iranian compliance with Articles II and III. The GoA expects that the IAEA Director General's report will deal forthrightly with the Iranian problem. Zischg cited the case of Iran as proof that Additional Protocol (AP) must be the "new minimum standard" for safeguards and reiterated Austria's support within the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) for AP compliance as a Condition of Supply.

SIGNALS NEEDED ON DISARMAMENT

¶13. (C) Zischg praised the U.S. record on Article VI, but noted that the RevCon's mandate will be to assess progress in the period 2000-2005, not any broader timeframe. He reviewed Austria's position that the "balance" inherent in the NPT will require strong signals from Nuclear Weapons States (NWS) that they are making rapid progress on disarmament. This is an incentive to others to remain within the NPT regime, or (as in the case of India and Pakistan) to join. Austria will urge the U.S. and Russia, in particular, to redouble disarmament efforts. Zischg expressed concern that U.S. plans to modernize warheads "sends the wrong signal" and "runs counter to disarmament." He drew a qualitative distinction between developing new classes of weapons and "stewardship" programs for existing systems.

¶14. (C) Zischg said that achieving a final declaration as the outcome of the 2005 RevCon is a high priority for Austria. He noted that in the medium term, Austrian public attitudes on the prospects for the future of IAEA and the NPT regime in general would depend on getting a good outcome from the RevCon. His views tracked closely with reftel assessment, however, that the environment for achieving consensus at the RevCon is substantially more difficult this time than in ¶12000. He hoped the U.S. would be "forward looking" and that the USG would be prepared to agree to some equivalent of the 2000 RevCon's "13 Steps."

¶15. (C) Kmentt (who recently transferred back to MFA from the Austrian delegation to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva) mentioned that recent talks on the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty had failed to produce a program of work. He asked whether Washington was shifting its position on the "Shannon Mandate," a move thought would not be helpful to achieving consensus at the NPT RevCon. Note: Kmentt will probably accompany Austrian A/S-equivalent for Non-Proliferation Wernfried Koeffler to the RevCon. Koeffler will soon thereafter depart MFA to take up a new assignment as Austria's Ambassador to Latvia.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS STRATEGY

16. (C) Post believes that there is sufficient convergence of views between the U.S. and the GoA to make it worthwhile to structure an ongoing dialogue on NPT issues. Austria's EU Presidency in the first half of 2006 and rotation into a seat of the IAEA Board of Governors in September 2006 represent opportunities to leverage our broad agreement with Austria on nonproliferation matters.

17. (SBU) The issue of Iran's nuclear programs (and possible U.S. actions to counter them) attract the most attention here.

-- Our Austrian interlocutors expressed interest in participating in private bilateral meetings or public roundtable discussions with U.S. nonproliferation experts. In Embassy's view, such events might be easiest to arrange on the margins of trips by U.S. officials to Vienna on IAEA business.

-- A DVC might be effective if a senior U.S. official were available to interact with Austrian nonproliferation experts and/or selected media representatives.

-- Austrian newspapers are generally reluctant to print Op-Eds by current U.S. officials. PA section has had recent success in placing Op-Eds signed by the Ambassador. Op-Eds by former U.S. officials and independent experts may also be welcome.

-- There are few, if any, academic journals on international affairs and security issues that attract an adequate readership to justify placement of articles. On the other hand, PA is often able to arrange interviews with well-regarded journalists who write for the more responsible mass-circulation dailies. Again, such an interview could take place on the margins of IAEA business with a minimum investment of time.

Brown